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## POPULAR LEGENDS OF THE SOUTH—No. III.

## ST. LATEERIN.

"When the *slua-shee*\* appear in lonely dell,  
And revels are rife when mortals dream,  
And wizards behold—but dare not tell  
The spells that are wrought by haunted stream :

"When the *shee-geehy*† rolls its boding cloud,  
And arrows unseen in vengeance fly ;  
When the voice of the *keener* is wild and loud  
O'er the maiden that died by the evil eye :

"When the art of the midwife fails to save  
The young mother doom'd to *fairy fort* ;  
When the traveller's lur'd beneath the wave,  
Where *Donall na Geela* keeps his court :

"What saves in the hour of faery,  
When goblins awake and gnomes have sway ?  
What scatters the ranks of the dread *slua-shee*,  
That circle the midnight traveller's way ?

"Supreme o'er the spirits of earth and sea,  
When blessed Lateerin's name is spoken,—  
The Druid enchantments fade and flee,  
And the spell of the midnight hour is broken.

"Thro' regions remote extends her fame,  
And many a clime and age can tell,  
What pilgrims invoking her holy name,  
Drank health at the flow of her *sainted well* !"

These lines are a literal translation of the fragment of a song, which rose to a wild and melancholy air amid the tombs and gravestones of Cullin, as I passed through that little village on a fine evening in autumn. The abrupt and irregular spirit of the original Irish, which I have vainly endeavoured to preserve in these stanzas, the stillness of the evening air, the echoes of the holy ruins around, the voice where strength and wild sweetness blended, and which to a fanciful mind, would seem that of some supernatural being, (for this singer among the tombs remained unseen,)—all conveyed an impulse to my heart which the boasted art of a Catalini would fail of communicating. Alighting from my horse, I clambered over the *stile* into the churchyard, towards the quarter whence the voice proceeded, and discovered my supernatural vocalist in the person of a wild looking country fellow of twenty-two, wearing a broad-brimmed hat made of that particular grass called *thraneen*, and equipped in a tight pair of sheepskin *inexpressibles*. He was stretched at full length along a grass-grown monument, and beat time with a formidable *cligh-alpeen*, to the music of his wild song on the time-worn slab that surmounted this ancient tomb.

I had travelled across the steep mountains, along the course of the river Ariglin, and was anxious to procure the assistance of a *smith*, the horse on which I rode having left a fore-shoe in one of the deep swamps of Pobble O'Keeffe—"Hillo, friend !" said I, "have the kindness to direct me to the next smith's forge."

He ceased his song at the sound of my voice, and seeing a well-dressed person before him, mechanically as it were, started on his legs and took off his broad-leaved hat. I always detest that prostration of spirit, which our peasantry too frequently betray, by doffing the *caubeen* to broad cloth without reference to the merit of the wearer, so I bid him be covered, with a rather bitter remark upon his meanness of deportment, that sent the glow of sensibility to tinge his deeply embrowned cheek.

"Bless your sowl, Sir," said he, upon repeating my interrogation respecting the smith's forge, "from whence did you come to enquire for a forge at Cullin ? Sure every body knows that all the coals in Cork, and the *bellowses* o' Munster wouldn't hate iron after the curse of blessed Lateerin."

"Who is blessed Lateerin, and why did she give the curse ?"

"O! its myself knows all about it,—often an' many's

the time I heerd the *Deerhogh*\* tell it to the strangers that ped rounds at the well forinst you there ; but sure a poor *spalpeen* like me, saving your presence, a'nt fit to talk to a dacent jantleman about blessed saints, an' sich things."

I took my seat on the old tomb, and bidding him sit beside me, encouraged him to proceed.

"Why, Sir, long ago, whin saints an' monasteries were in vogue, three blessed sisters lived in this country, the eldest at Kilmeen, the other at Drumtariff, and Lateerin, the youngest, at Cullin. She kept in a *skulp* here where the ould walls of the church are, an' her business night an' day was praying to God, and curing all the sick that were brought to her far an' near."

Here he called my attention to a clear spring in a small meadow, contiguous to the churchyard. It was shaded by an ancient whitethorn, which presented a strange appearance, every part of it being covered with threads of various colours, which were fastened to the branches by the numerous crowds that had fulfilled their votive pilgrimages to the well.

"That well, they say, sprung up to give her water ; and when she wanted to cook the dinner, for she couldn't always be fasting an' praying, she would bring the *seed of the fire* in the fould of her petticoat from the smith's forge, for the houses were very scarce at Cullin thin by all accounts. The three blessed sisters visited each other regular wance a week ; and the holy angels of heaven, honour an' praise be to 'em, made a fine road one night from Kilmeen to Cullin through Drumtariff, because the poor ladies wint barefooted, and the passage was full of wild brakes and deep quagmires.† After Lateerin wint to heaven, this blessed well got great vartue from God in the cure of all disorders. The 24th of July is her patheren day, and, ma-vrone, thin the blind and the lame get their walk an' seeing here ;—sure it was only the last patheren that a poor disabled cratther left thin *crutches* there at the well behind him, and galloped home on two good legs like a May-boy."

"But about the curse—"

"O! is it the curse you mane ? Musha, you're right, Sir, didn't I tell you afore ; I have no *gunption*, and am a mere *omedhaun* at telling a story."

"Lateerin, Sir, was the youngest of her sisters, as I said a while ago, and, as they say, was a purty, tidy woman, considering a saint, and when she wanted a spark of fire, she always put the coal in her petticoat. The smith could not forbear noticing her legs, that for all her fasting were as smooth and as white as ivory, but respect for the blessed saint kept him silent a long time. But one day as she put the living coal into her petticoat as usual to light her fire, the smith said, 'Lateerin, you have a beautiful pair of legs.' The poor saint who never thought of her beauty afore, looked down to see if the smith spoke truth, whin, God bless us ! the petticoat caught fire, and her garments blazed about her. In her grief and kumentation for this fault, she prayed that Cullin might never again have a smith to tempt the innocent to sin, and though many made the attempt, no iron would *redde*n in all the townland from that day to this."

I arose and pursued my way towards Mill-street, and have only to add, that I made close inquiry respecting this strange opinion, and found that though the place is well situated for a *smithy*, being a country village, and a place of much resort, having a chapel, a burying-ground, and some public houses ; it is said that every attempt to carry on the smith's trade at Cullin has proved ineffectual, nor has any forge been seen there within living memory.

E. W.

\* A *Deerhogh* is an old woman that takes cure of the well, and shews others the manner of paying the rounds.—She is supported by the donations of the pilgrims.

† The remains of an ancient paved way may be traced between the places—it extends to the distance of ten English miles.

## DUBLIN:

Printed and Published by JOHN S. FOLDS, 5, Bachelor's-walk.  
Sold by all Booksellers in Ireland,  
in Liverpool by Willmer and Smith in Manchester by Wheeler in  
Birmingham by Drake ; in Nottingham by Wright ;  
in Edinburgh by R. Grant & Son ; in Glasgow  
by J. Nevin, Jun. and in London by Joseph Robins, Fleet-street.

\* *Slua-shee*—Fairy host.

† *Shee-geehy*—Fairy tempest—those whirling eddies which raise dust, straws, &c., and are supposed by the country people to be caused by the fairies.